

FAHP News, March 30, 2015

Boys State in Dover, 1941: I was selected as one of three from Wilmington Friends School to attend “Boys State,” a two-day event in May sponsored by the American Legion. John Bader, the Ford dealer in Newark, was chairman of the Legion Committee that ran the event. For the better part of two days, Friday and Saturday, boys from high schools all over the state were chosen to become temporary legislators and occupy the real desks in the same chambers as the elected members of Delaware’s General Assembly. From Wilmington Friends, Fritz Marston and I from the Class of ’41 went to the House of Representatives, and Henry Berl ’42 went to the State Senate. I drove down and back both days with Marston and two fellows selected from Sanford School as my passengers

To start things off the first morning, we were taken upstairs in Legislative Hall to meet Walter W. Bacon, Delaware’s real governor, in his office. We felt important as he welcomed us to Boys State. Once downstairs in the House chamber, the workings of state government were explained, how the Speaker of the House and the Minority Leader were elected by their caucuses and how we were to behave for two days as if we had the power to sponsor, introduce, and vote on bills to be considered. There were lesser jobs in the House to be performed, in addition to the legislators. Marston nominated me to be one of two reading clerks; the other was a fellow from Sussex County. We had to “read out” all the bills for consideration and vote.

Fritz Marston himself campaigned for Speaker but had to be satisfied with Minority Leader. He bought a cigar and from his desk in the front row on the aisle, put on the air of an “old-time politician in a smoke-filled room.” I think he regarded Boys State as a farce; I took it much more seriously and thought it was an honor to be selected. On one of the days, we had our lunch at the Pleasant Inn on South State Street near the movie theatre, which had previously been known as the Duval Tea Room.

The other reading clerk had a real “downstate” accent, and he struggled even more than I did in getting the words right. He was reading out a bill proposing an overhead bridge to replace the railroad grade crossing from North Broad Street north of Middletown. He seemed to think “north” was “mouth,” and he had to read this description several times. I knew the crossing, which was near my grandmother’s home, and I knew he had the wrong word, but nothing much happened. I think the bill may have passed to build the bridge “mouth” of Middletown.

In the bills I had to read, only one comes to mind. It had to do with disease, which was referred to as “malady” in the bill. I remembered “Milady” from the Three Musketeers, but I had never heard of “malady.” So each time I had to read “malady,” I read it as “milady,” many in the chamber were snickering, and Marston was laughing his head off. I became more and more embarrassed but kept going to the end with a very red face. I don’t recall the fate of the bill.

I know Boys State kept going, and my guess is that more girls participate today than boys, but in 1941, there were no girls there.

Work Report: On Tuesday, March 24, 10 volunteers were on hand as follows: Jerry Novak (in charge), Bill Schwoebel, Ted Kamen, Brent McDougall, Anne Cleary, Mike Ciosek, Steve Bryce, Mark Russell, Bob Jordan, and Jay Williams.

On the Lionel trains layout, in addition to more wiring improvement, the operation of the tiny water wheel at the mill was checked out. Extensive track work on the A.V.R.R. has deemed the railroad ready for the Easter Egg Hunt days, April 3 and 4. Coach #885, having been repaired in the engine house, was re-assembled and returned to its train in the tunnel. The “Diesel” locomotive was checked out. Brent McDougall moved the locomotives around in the engine house, so that steam Locomotive 401 is on the center track, much easier to access the turntable. The boiler and frame from 402, now apart, is on the “new” track nearest the track bench.

In the back building, the storage pads were moved temporarily to the trailers, and the slat board brought to the snack bar, making room for the boy scouts to proceed with building the new tender for “Little Toot”. With the slat board, it is hoped for better organization of our portable signs. Lexol was applied to the leather on the ’32 Packard, and paint-stripping continued on parts of the Cretors popper. The windshields were temporarily installed on the Models 76 and 735, awaiting the return from illness of the man who can replace the glass.

On Thursday, March 26, the following 15 volunteers attended: Mark Russell (in charge), Steve Bryce, Geoff Fallows, Devon Hall, Bob Jordan, Ted Kamen, Paul Kratunis, Lou Mandich, Gerhard Maute, Eugene Maute, Edwin Paschall, Jim Personti, Bill Schwoebel, Bob Stransky, and Kelly Williams.

Packing was added to the water pumps on the Model 76, and a new syphon valve was installed. It is hoped that this will solve the problem of the car not syphoning. The Diesel “shells” (exposed bodies), having been beautifully repainted at the Chester County Technical High School, were returned and installed on the locomotive. Cataloguing in the library continued. The slide valve on the right side of Locomotive 401 was re-adjusted, and it is hoped this locomotive will perform well during 2015. The water cooler in the shop was cleaned and sanitized.

More sand-blasting occurred on the Cretors parts to be painted. More railroad ties were cut to length. The ’32 Packard was checked again to determine where the knock in the rear is coming from. It is believed that it is a universal joint or joint support. The car will be taken to a professional shop on 3/31 to further explore and hopefully correct the problem.

On Sunday, March 29, eight members of the AVRR crew were on hand for test runs over the newly inspected and revamped track. Led by Brent McDougall, the others were Linda Herman and her grandson Billy, Dennis Tiley, Mike Ciosek, Mike Leister, Dave Leon, and Steve Bryce. The diesel was run around several times after its repainting and re-assembling, and all went well. A few ties were replaced in the tunnel, and the trestle was thoroughly checked over. There is one rail length there that should be replaced before long. The repair to the damaged grade crossing appears to be good. The steam locomotive was not fired up. Several things are recommended for attention soon. All appears to be ready for the Egg Hunt runs on April 3 and 4.